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Association of School Nurses of Connecticut

SB No. 929

AN ACT CONCERNING THE QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS OF SCHOOL NURSES.

Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann and Members of the Education Committee,

Since 1982, there has been no change in qualifications for school nurses despite the vast changes in education and the children in Connecticut schools in 2011.

The value of the school nurse in terms of educational outcomes is supported with data from the Connecticut Health Services Survey

<http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2678&Q=320768&pm=1&dsftns=45539>)which indicates that 90% of students seen by a qualified school nurse return to class within 15 minutes. When a school nurse is not present, students are sent home. School nurses perform a very different role now than in the past. The increase in students with special needs, needs of all students, mandated health requirements, data collections, and a changing society increases the role of school nurses proportionately to the needs of the students and families and disproportionately to the environment in which they work.

School nurses are mandated in Connecticut. Although one could argue that qualified nurses may require more in salaries, salaries are negotiated by individual districts. There is no cost attached to this legislation; nor should increasing qualifications be construed as an "unfunded mandate."

The Connecticut Health Services Survey indicates more than half of school nurses have a bachelor's degree; many have master's; some have doctorates. School nurses participate in health education, HUSKY outreach, child abuse, 504's, PPT's, school safety, crisis management, indoor air quality, AED training, and wellness; issues you legislate for. School nurses are first line responders and for many children their only access to medical care and treatment. In an unstable economy, this is precisely the time to ensure that every child has access to quality health care in school.

Children do not come to school with monitors or x-ray machines. Unlike the hospital, school nurses are the only health professional in school. They need strong skills, a vast array of knowledge, and experience. In 1999, legislators, Education and Public Health, and nurses came together on this same issue. At that time, the process to increase qualifications for school nurses began. It has been 12 years and here we are.

If not now, when?

According to the CDC, "the academic success of America's youth is strongly linked with their health." Despite these linkages, education and health are treated as separate." Thank you for making the health education connection. I ask for your support of this bill on behalf of the children of Connecticut.